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(54) **Method and apparatus for modifying a digital data stream**

(57) This invention relates to improvements in controlling the decoder buffer occupancy, particularly in relation to, but not exclusively to, switching between compressed bitstreams.

This invention provides a method of modifying a digital bitstream 11 to be transmitted through a decoder 14 having a buffer 15. An expected level of buffer occupancy is determined for a point in the digital bitstream 11 and the digital bitstream 11 is modified at that point to

change the buffer occupancy to a second level. The second level may be determined from a second digital bitstream 12. One advantage of this method is that the occupancy of the buffer 15 can be adjusted to match the buffer requirements of the second bitstream 12 before switching to the second bitstream 12.

The invention provides method and apparatus for improving the decoder buffer management during switching between bitstreams.

